

9 SEPTEMBER 2014

# CAREER GUIDANCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE FOLLOW-UP INQUIRY



GATSBY

**SUMMARY**

- The Gatsby Foundation has a long-standing interest in career guidance. In April 2014 we published *Good Career Guidance*, providing eight benchmarks for career guidance, based on a wide-ranging international study.
- Our study concluded that, while there is no single ‘magic bullet’ for career guidance, doing a number of things (identified by our benchmarks) consistently and well can significantly improve the quality of career guidance provision.
- Engagement with employers, through multiple encounters and work experience, are essential for giving pupils an authentic picture of the world of work. We welcome the emphasis on the role of employers in the government’s ‘inspiration’ initiative. Employer engagement alone however is not enough: it must be accompanied by a range of school-based actions.
- It is right to give schools the responsibility for career guidance, but there needs to be stronger incentives for schools to do it well. Destination measures are an important incentive, but they are not yet fit for purpose. Schools should be given the responsibility for publishing their own destination data for three years after pupils have left the school.
- Schools’ career guidance arrangements need to be stable and well understood by pupils, parents, teachers and employers. Each school should make this known by publishing a Careers Plan, though this does not need to be done annually.
- The National Careers Service needs a much wider remit to work with schools. It should be reconstituted as an independent agency with its own board on which employers are strongly represented.
- Face-to-face guidance is an essential part of the career guidance mix. It must always be given in the interest of the pupil alone, by an appropriately trained person who need not necessarily be external to the school.
- Much more needs to be done to promote the value of apprenticeships to pupils.

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 Gatsby is a Trust set up in 1967 by David Sainsbury (now Lord Sainsbury of Turville) to realise his charitable objectives. We focus our support on the following areas:
  - Plant science research
  - Neuroscience research
  - Science and engineering education
  - Economic development in Africa
  - Public policy research and advice
  - The Arts
- 2 As part of our support for science and engineering education, Gatsby has a long-standing interest in career guidance. In April 2014, we published *Good Career Guidance*, the results of a year-long international study carried out by Sir John Holman to distil the key features of good career guidance. The report sets out eight benchmarks for good career guidance, and our response to this consultation is based largely on the evidence in that report, which is available at <http://www.gatsby.org.uk/GoodCareerGuidance>. Hard copies of the report are available on request.
- 3 The government says that ‘there is no international model that is perfect’ (DfE para 5<sup>1</sup>) and we agree. There is, however, evidence from overseas and from the best English schools that identifies the features of effective career guidance, and these features make up our benchmarks. Our study concludes that there is no single ‘magic bullet’ for career guidance: it is a matter of doing a number of things – identified in the benchmarks – consistently and well.
- 4 The government’s written evidence to the Committee’s inquiry, and the statutory guidance issued in April 2014, place great emphasis on the importance of engagement with employers. We agree: the best schools in this country and overseas offer multiple opportunities for encounters with employers so students can build a picture of the world of work and begin to decide what kind of job is for them. But this is not sufficient on its own: the ‘pull’ of employers needs to be complemented by a gentle ‘push’ from schools. Without exception, in the successful countries, and the successful English independent schools we have studied, schools provide students with guidance to complement encounters with employers and work experience.

## SCHOOLS’ STATUTORY DUTY

- 5 We agree with the government’s policy of transferring responsibility for career guidance to schools. This is consistent with the wider policy of delegation of budgets and decision-making to schools, which are indeed best placed to make decisions about what works for their pupils. But Ofsted’s September 2013 report showed just how patchy the provision of guidance is, and indeed how poor it is in many schools.
- 6 The government points to ‘positive developments in the school system’ (DfE para 10), but there is no evidence that the current arrangements will lead to the radical improvements needed. By placing such faith in employer engagement alone, the government is putting all its eggs in one basket when what is needed is a range of measures. The government believes that the revised statutory guidance for schools ‘provides a clear framework for schools’ (DfE para 12), but the reality is that it is far from clear what schools need to be doing.

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<sup>1</sup> References are to paragraphs in DfE’s written evidence to the Education Committee’s inquiry.

- 7 If responsibility is to be discharged by schools, there need to be incentives to encourage them to provide high quality career guidance for all their pupils. It is true that Ofsted has enhanced its scrutiny of career guidance (DfE paras 14 and 23) and this is good, but it will never be sufficient because Ofsted does not routinely inspect all schools. It cannot be assumed that the schools that escape inspection necessarily have good career guidance. We agree that destination measures are a key incentive, but we do not think they are yet fit for purpose (see below).

### EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

- 8 We welcome the emphasis on the role of employers in the government's 'inspiration' initiative. It is true that a multitude of organisations are being set up to encourage employer engagement (DfE para 7), but from the perspective of the school this diversity can be baffling and it can be difficult to know where to start. There is no systematic national data on quality or coverage and our *Good Career Guidance* report calls for a comprehensive review of employer engagement, focussing on what should be done to make sure that every school has the high quality employer links it needs.
- 9 Our international study shows that pupils need a combination of multiple encounters with employers, to build a picture of the world of work, and more in-depth work experience. Work experience opens pupils' eyes to the realities of the workplace: the need to dress and behave in the expected way, to arrive punctually and follow instructions accurately.
- 10 The school survey we carried out as part of *Good Career Guidance* indicates that under 50% of schools now provide traditional work experience for under-16s. However, as part of the raising of the education participation age to 17 in England, work experience now forms a required part of 16-19 study programmes, in which schools and colleges are expected to offer their post-16 pupils 'high quality and meaningful' work experience (DfE para 47). We support this move, but it remains to be seen how much it will happen in practice, and close monitoring is needed.

### DESTINATION MEASURES

- 11 We see destination measures as the key incentive for schools to do better in career guidance. No headteacher wants to publish destination data showing their pupils are ending up unemployed or in low skill jobs. But the current destination measures fall well short of what is needed, despite recent minor changes described in the DfE's evidence (para 25). Only Key Stage 4 education destinations are currently published in school performance tables. Key Stage 5 destinations, including employment destinations, are only published as an 'experimental statistical release' on the DfE website, where they are hard to find. The government says it will make such data part of performance tables in the future (DfE para 25), but it gives no date.
- 12 We recommend that the responsibility for publishing destinations should be transferred to schools. Every secondary school should be responsible for publishing the destinations of all its pupils for three years after their leaving date. The published destination data should be at an aggregated level, showing the main categories of employment, apprenticeship and further and higher education. The responsibility should be placed on schools, but they should have the support of HESA, NCCIS and other agencies that are currently involved in collecting destination data for the government.
- 13 Publishing reliable destination data will help incentivise schools to prioritise career guidance. But there are other advantages in schools collecting and analysing their own destination data. It is an important part of self-evaluation: by looking at trends and patterns, schools can check how well they are succeeding in raising aspirations and challenging stereotypes. Collecting this data helps the school to maintain a comprehensive database of alumni to whom they may be able to turn when the school is running employer engagement events.

### A SCHOOL CAREERS PLAN

- 14 A feature of the best career guidance systems internationally is that they are stable and well understood by pupil, parents, teachers and employers. These stakeholders need to know exactly what will happen in the career planning cycle, and when, so parents know when and how to support their children and employers can plan their schools engagement activities. We therefore recommend that every school should have a Careers Plan published on its website, which would enable stakeholders to see how the school is planning to meet the statutory guidance. However, we agree with the government that requiring schools to publish an annual careers plan would be an unnecessary piece of bureaucracy (DfE para 27). If the arrangements are well planned and stable, it will not be necessary to re-publish them every year, other than the critical dates.

### THE NATIONAL CAREERS SERVICE

- 15 We agree with the government that a return to the ‘Connexions’ model of a national network of careers advisers is undesirable (DfE para 10). It is right that responsibility for providing this guidance is transferred to schools, provided the right incentives are in place to encouraged schools to prioritise career guidance highly. So we do not advocate that the National Careers Service (NCS) should re-create a national network of career advisers.
- 16 However, we consider that the current remit of the NCS with regard to schools is wholly inadequate, and we recommend that it should significantly expand its work with schools, young people and parents. In particular, the NCS should:
- develop and extend its online services targeted at schools, young people and their parents, and support training in their use;
  - provide a channel for live labour market information from the ‘LMI for All’ data source;
  - disseminate good practice in career guidance to schools;
  - support schools in creating their Careers Plan; and
  - collaborate with employers’ organisations to broker employer encounters with schools. We are pleased to note that the government has already extended the role of the NCS in this way (DfE para 30).
- 17 To make it more responsive to employers, the NCS should be reconstituted as an independent agency with its own board on which employers are strongly represented, alongside schools and colleges. One possible model for the future status of the NCS is the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), the government-funded organisation responsible for supporting the professional development of teachers in further education. Although it receives government funds, ETF is constituted as an independent charity with its own board.

### FACE-TO-FACE GUIDANCE

- 18 We regret that the policy debate about career guidance has become polarised, with employer engagement on one side and professional career guidance on the other. This is a false dichotomy: the international evidence shows you need both. It is the international norm for face-to-face guidance to be available when students need it, especially when they are making subject choices. This should be the case in all English schools, though we would stop short of saying it should be compulsory for every pupil whether they want it or not.
- 19 Guidance must be impartial and always in the interests of the pupil alone. This is especially important in 11-18 schools, where there is an incentive to keep the pupil in the school even if it is not in their best interests. Guidance needs to show pupils the opportunities available in apprenticeships and

vocational courses as well the well-known route to university. Pupils need to be given multiple opportunities for encounters with further and higher education, to show them the full range of options open to them. Wherever possible, pupils should have opportunities to meet young people in further and higher education, with whom they can readily identify.

- 20 However, we do not agree that guidance must always be externally provided: we see no reason why a teacher should not give face-to-face guidance interviews, provided they are appropriately trained and committed to the principle of impartiality. We agree with the government that employers, mentors and coaches can give valuable guidance (DfE para 33), but there can be no substitute for a structured career guidance interview from a trained person. Records of each interview should be kept and should be accessible to pupils and parents.
- 21 We agree that it is difficult for teachers, and even for trained career advisers, to have comprehensive information about jobs and work at their fingertips (DfE para 38). We commend the work that the government has initiated on 'LMI for All', making live labour market information available, but we recommend that more should be done to create interfaces that are suitable for use by pupils, parents and teachers.
- 22 The most important job of teachers is to teach their subject, but there are plenty of opportunities for classroom teachers to show the relevance of their subject to specific careers. Indeed, this can be an inspiring and motivating way of teaching, as is recognised explicitly in the national curriculum regulations in Finland and Ontario. However, it is not realistic to expect classroom teachers to have career information at their fingertips. We recommend that, in the case of STEM, the National STEM Centre, the National Science Learning Centre and the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics should lead exemplary work to show how curriculum resources for science, technology, engineering and mathematics teachers can more effectively showcase careers learning opportunities.

### APPRENTICESHIPS

- 23 We commend the steps that government is taking to promote apprenticeships to all young people (DfE paras 4 and 42), but they are not enough. Many schools and teachers know little about the opportunities that are now available through this route, and do not appreciate that for many students this is a more rewarding course than study in further or higher education. We recommend that more use should be made of *young* apprentices as ambassadors, particularly where they are alumni of the school they are visiting, an approach that is very effectively used in Germany.

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